

ACT ONE

TIME: *A hot summer's night.*

SCENE: *The apartment of OLIVE MADISON. One of those six-room affairs on Riverside Drive, New York, in the eighties. The building is about fifty years old and still has vestiges of its once glorious past. High ceilings, walk-in closets and thick walls. We are in the combination living room-dining room. Two steps up is the front door and next to that, a hall closet. A window at S.L. with a broken air conditioner. Towards center rear, a doorway leads to the kitchen. At S.R., a hallway leads to the back bedrooms and the bathroom.*

The apartment is quite unkempt. Books are a mess in the bookshelves. Magazines and old newspapers on the floors and tables. Unopened mail and unopened laundry packages lie about.

AT RISE: *A dining table at S.R. is being used for the Girls' weekly Trivial Pursuit game. Four women are at the table playing, two on each side. RENEE and SYLVIE, a compulsive smoker, on one side; VERA and MICKEY, a uniformed policewoman, on the other. Food and drinks, none too appetizing, are on the table. MICKEY is standing.*

MICKEY. *(shakes dice in hand)* C'mon, baby, we need a piece of the pie. *(She throws dice.)* . . . Five! *(She counts off spaces on the board.)* One—two—three—four—five! . . . Science and Nature. *(She sits. RENEE takes card from the box and looks at it.)*

RENEE. Oh, you're going to love this . . . "How many times a year does a penguin have sex?" (*MICKEY looks at her partner, VERA, puzzled.*)

MICKEY. Do you know any penguins? . . . Intimately?

VERA. That shouldn't be Science and Nature. That should be gossip.

MICKEY. I'll say they do it six times.

VERA. Why only six times?

MICKEY. Did you ever see what they look like?

VERA. They live on icebergs. What else could they do all winter? (*to opponents*) I say twenty times.

RENEE. Wrong. They do it once.

SYLVIE. *Once?* Jesus, I married a penguin.

RENEE. Christ, it's hot in here. When is she going to fix her air conditioner?

SYLVIE. (*hands the dice to RENEE*) Your roll.

RENEE. I'm going to pass out, I swear.

VERA. Someone told me you were seeing a doctor. Is it anything serious?

RENEE. No. We only had two dates. (*rolls dice*) Four. (*counts off with marker*) One—two—three—four . . . Oh, Christ. Sports!

SYLVIE. Go the other way. (*to VERA*) We take Science. (*RENEE moves marker the opposite way.*)

MICKEY. Two minutes to go and counting down.

SYLVIE. (*to MICKEY*) Do you mind if she asks the question first? (*to VERA*) Go on, Vera.

VERA. (*reads from card*) "What does C mean in Einstein's Theory of Relativity, E equals MC squared?" (*SYLVIE and RENEE look at her with their mouths open, dumbfounded.*)

SYLVIE. We'll try sports.

VERA. You can't change after you've heard the question.

RENEE. She picked it on *my* turn. I pick sports. (*She moves marker back.*)

MICKEY. (*looks at watch*) A minute thirty and counting down.

VERA. (*reads*) "Who pitched back to back no-hitters for the Cincinnati Reds in 1938?" (*SYLVIE and RENEE stare again with mouths open, dumbfounded.*)

SYLVIE. (*to RENEE*) You want to take a crack at MC squared?

RENEE. (*to VERA*) Give us a hint.

VERA. What kind of hint?

RENEE. Is it baseball or football?

VERA. It's baseball. I'll give you another hint. He has a Dutch name . . .

SYLVIE. . . . Dutch Schultz.

MICKEY. Dutch Schultz was a gangster.

RENEE. Joe Rembrandt.

VERA. Is that your answer?

SYLVIE. Peter Windmill.

VERA. Is that your answer?

MICKEY. Sixty seconds and counting down.

SYLVIE. What is this, liftoff at Cape Canaveral? (*calls off towards kitchen*) Olive, we need help.

OLIVE. (*offstage*) I'm coming. I'm coming.

VERA. Do you give up?

RENEE. Not yet . . . Bobby Amsterdam . . . Tony Tulips.

VERA. Give up. You'll never get it. I have to leave by twelve.

SYLVIE. Where the hell are you running?

VERA. I told you that when I sat down. I have to leave by twelve. Mickey, didn't I say that when I sat down? I have to leave by twelve.

MICKEY. I'm really starting to worry about Florence.

She's never been this late before.

VERA. I told Harry I'd be home by one the latest. We're making an eight o'clock plane to Florida. (*SYLVIE glares at her.*)

MICKEY. Who goes to Florida in July?

VERA. It's off-season. There are no crowds and you get the best rooms for one-tenth the price.

SYLVIE. Some vacation. Six cheap people in an empty hotel.

MICKEY. Maybe Florence is sick. I'm really getting nervous.

VERA. Do you give up?

SYLVIE. Mickey Dikes . . . I hate this game.

MICKEY. Did you know Florence once locked herself in the bathroom overnight in Bloomingdale's? She wrote out her entire will on a half a roll of toilet paper . . . (*looks at watch*) Time is almost up.

SYLVIE. (*calls out*) Olive! We're running out of time.

(*OLIVE comes out of the kitchen with a tray of food and soft drinks.*)

OLIVE. Alright, what's the question?

MICKEY. You only have four seconds.

VERA. Who pitched back to back no-hitters—

OLIVE. (*in one breath*) Johnny Van Der Meer on June 11th against the Boston Braves, three-nothing, and on June 15th against the Brooklyn Dodgers, six-nothing, his overall record for the year was fifteen wins and ten losses, I have one second left over, ask me another question.

RENEE. She's incredible.

SYLVIE. You really love sports, don't you?

OLIVE. I love big men in tight pants . . . Who gets a no caffeine nutra sweet one calorie Pepsi?

MICKEY. I do.

OLIVE. (*brings her the can*) One can of chemicals for Mickey the Cop.

MICKEY. (*holds can*) It's warm.

RENEE. Because her refrigerator's been broken for two weeks.

OLIVE. So it drips a little, who wants food?

MICKEY. What have you got?

OLIVE. (*looks at sandwiches*) I got brown sandwiches and green sandwiches.

MICKEY. What's the green?

OLIVE. (*looks*) It's either very new cheese or very old meat.

MICKEY. I'll take the brown.

RENEE. You're going to eat food from that refrigerator? I saw milk standing in there that wasn't even in the bottle.

OLIVE. What are you, some kind of health nut? Eat, Mickey. Eat.

SYLVIE. (*to RENEE*) We go again. Roll 'em.

RENEE. (*to OLIVE*) I thought you had a new maid starting to work on Monday.

OLIVE. No. I didn't pass the interview.

RENEE. (*shakes dice . . . to others*) The woman produces a prime time news show and she doesn't have a maid. (*She throws the dice.*) Five. One—two—three—four—five . . . Science and Nature.

VERA. Oh, this is good . . . "What closes when a frog swallows?" (*RENEE and SYLVIE look at OLIVE.*)

SYLVIE. HIS EYES!! . . . They close their eyes.

MICKEY. That's right. How did you know that?

SYLVIE. I went out with a guy who looked like a frog.

MICKEY. (*to RENEE*) Your turn again. Roll 'em.

RENEE. Hey, Olive, can we make a rule? Every six months you have to buy fresh potato chips.